

Amendments to the Abstract

Please replace the abstract of the disclosure with the following amended abstract of the disclosure:

A method embodied in a computer program product for combining first and second attribute sets each comprising at least one attribute and value pair by which a named attribute is assigned a value that comprises one of a end value and a further attribute set involves carrying out a merge operation that combines the attribute and value pairs of the first and second attribute sets according to their levels in respective attribute trees with conflicts arising between attributes having the same path in each tree being resolved, on a top-down basis, according to predetermined rules.